

## NOO FAQ

### EH Mailroom/Copy Center & Café

1. Can you tell me if there are existing members of the work crew? I know that one of our residents has been on that crew.

**Answer:** There are currently 3 workers reporting onsite daily. A 4<sup>th</sup> worker has been on leave since the pandemic began and their status is pending.

2. So, the provider only oversees the operations, we would not be utilizing our own individuals for the work?

**Answer:** The provider will oversee the current program and workers. The provider may select additional workers as the current workers transition out, or the program is expanded pending approval from the state of CT that the need exists.

3. Would the cafeteria expand beyond light snacks?

**Answer:** That would be up to the provider agency. Expanded food options would be a sought-after outcome, however, should be provided within a structure offering skill building in food prep services.

4. What is the contractual structure for the provider agency?

**Answer:** Although a contract outlining oversight expectations and employment goals would be drafted, currently no such contract exists.

5. Will the PowerPoint be available?

**Answer:** Yes

6. Would it be expected that the General Workers currently there will move to other employment in the community to make room for new workers?

**Answer:** The expectation is that workers would be provided an opportunity to consider competitive employment options in the community.

7. How is our agency paid for providing the oversight/job coaches?

**Answer:** Hourly rates based on the workers' LON.

8. Do you have an idea of when you want the cafe to reopen?

**Answer:** Once the state of CT's Covid guidelines eliminates the need for social distancing, a business plan for the café can be formulated as appropriate.

9. Is there a limit on job coaches?

**Answer:** There are no coaching support caps. Currently, 1 on-site coach and 1 trained backup coach is adequate. Program expansion may require additional staffing

10. If we expand the cafe is there an opportunity to hire more general workers?

**Answer:** Yes, pending approval from the state of CT that the need exists.

11. Our primary question has to do with getting clarity on whether this is primarily an assumption of the work being done by the current provider as seems to be

indicated on page 1 of the Application document. It states that *"this application is for a DDS Qualified Provider to continue oversight and GSE supports for 3-4 General Workers with ID/DD who receive DDS supports and are workers with the East Hartford Mailroom and Copy Center, as well as enhancing the Breaker's Cafe to provide snack and lunch options with the same location."*

**Answer:** Initially a continuation of the program *as is currently run* is needed. Expansion and/or changes as outlined in the NOO packet based on business needs are encouraged.

12. What is meant by "providing creative growth"?

**Answer:** Any changes that would enhance the current program to: improve services to the end user; allow for additional skill building for the workers; and provide opportunities for workers to transition to community based competitive employment.

13. What is envisioned by the phrase "offer training and collaborative engagement to host site business employees as appropriate"?

**Answer:** The expectation is that the provider overseeing the program will promote interactivity as appropriate between workers and host site staff. There is no training component for host business employees, disregard that phrase.

14. Can you elaborate on what is expected for "job development for outplacement in related, competitive employment in the community"? Is this intended for the folks who currently work there? If not, the for whom? Are new people expected to be trained here for out-placement?

**Answer:** Skill training and job development should be provided as appropriate for current and new workers who express a desire to explore opportunities for community based competitive employment. New workers may be added pending approval from state of CT that the need exists.

15. Will the current provider be available to share their experience? Will applicants be able to observe operations in person?

**Answer:** A transition period with the current provider is the expectation, however commensurate training will be provided if needed.

16. What is the difference between what is being done there now and what DDS wants to happen in the future?

**Answer:** Currently the GSE provides basic task completion with minimal skill building or layering on of more complex tasks. It is anticipated skill building will be increased with a goal toward placement into competitive community employment.

17. Are the workers considered competitively employed now? Are they free to remain employed there indefinitely if they choose?

**Answer:** Although the workers do earn minimum wage, it may not be commensurate to others doing the same work, there is no opportunity for advancement and no benefits are provided, however, their positions are secure based on the needs of the host.

18. Is DDS committed to remaining in this location?

**Answer:** Currently, there has not been any communication regarding changes to leasing contracts for DDS Regional locations.

19. How many DDS employees does DDS expect to be in this location? The NOO indicates over 200. I believe you referenced 150. How many work on average in the office now?

**Answer:** Pre Covid there were 150 workers, and additional visitors, guests and those attending trainings periodically exceeded 200. During the current health crisis, approximately 20% of the workforce may be in the building and visitors are minimized

20. Will you consider an application from a provider that has no experience operating a mailroom or cafe, assuming we'd plan to hire people with that experience?

**Answer:** Yes

21. Does the state provide funds to purchase items for the café or is that the provider's responsibility?

**Answer:** The Café inventory initial start up was funded by DDS and the profits are used to replenish the inventory.

22. If we want to expand the café's offerings, can we use the kitchen space to prepare items?

**Answer:** Food preparation requires a health inspection and licensing by the appropriate city and/or state licensing agent. All food preparation must be in adherence to the Department of Health and Town of East Hartford food license and preparation requirements.

23. GSE workers are considered state employees with the title of General Worker, what are the wages for those workers?

**Answer:** General Workers receive the CT minimum wage.

24. Please clarify--Are the workers paid directly by DDS or does DDS pay the provider to be the employer of record while still maintaining the General Worker designation?

**Answer:** General Worker wages are processed and paid by DDS

25. If wages are above \$13.00, why would DDS be asking for individuals to consider working elsewhere?

**Answer:** Although the workers do earn minimum wage, it may not be commensurate to others doing the same work, there is no opportunity for advancement and there are no benefits provided

26. Why does DDS not deem this competitive employment when the workers are interacting with other non-disabled personnel and customers?

**Answer:** Although the setting is diverse, the wages may not be commensurate to others doing the same work, there is no opportunity for advancement and there are no benefits provided

27. If positions are vacated, what is the process for new general workers to be hired/placed within that role? Do they go through the formal DAS hiring process?

**Answer:** Replacement & additional workers may be selected by the provider, pending approval from the state of CT that the need exists.

28. With many businesses having trouble with retention, why would DDS be looking for these businesses to rollout the workers?

**Answer:** Competitive, community-based employment remains the vision for individuals supported by DDS.

29. The Breaker's Café is not a self-sustaining business. What is the income and loss experienced? Do you have Profit & Loss statements you can share?

**Answer:** Currently, proceeds and expenses related to the café are retained within an account overseen by the DDS Business Office. Appropriate records will be provided to the awarded provider.

30. Is the Café open to all within the building? If so, what is the capacity of the building?

**Answer:** Yes, the Café is available to all in the building including staff & guests. Pre Covid there were 150 workers, and additional visitors, guests and those attending trainings periodically exceeded 200.

Currently, approximately 20% of the workforce may be in the building, and visitors are minimized.

31. What equipment/appliances are within the café? Who has access to use these items?

**Answer:** An older candy and snack style vending machine, cash register, and various non-commercial small appliances including coffee maker, toaster, and toaster oven are available.

32. Who makes decisions regarding the items sold and the pricing of items in the café?

**Answer:** The decision making would be a joint endeavor between the provider and workers as part of employment training. The prices are expected to be competitive with others in the area.

33. What technology is presently being used by these operations?

**Answer:** There are minimal assistive tech enhancements currently being utilized in either the mailroom or café.

34. What is the setup of Breakers to do meal preparation?

**Answer:** It is not currently set up for meal prep. Major enhancements would be required for meal prep which may be limited as the building is leased. Appropriate licensing and approval will also be required for any food handling or meal preparation. A pre-made, prepared service option may be better utilization of the space for the provision of meals.

35. When you state *looking for self-sufficiency*, how does that apply to the mailroom?

**Answer:** Self-sufficiency would likely apply only to the café, for example for a pre-made, prepared food service option.

36. You indicate in the NOO about submitting a business plan. What details can you provide about the current operation to allow for a business plan to be formulated? Available equipment, appliances, current pricing, current food offerings, hours of operation, expansion of hours to operate, etc.

**Answer:** Current food offerings in the café are limited to snacks from the vending machine and refrigerator, overseen by the workers in the program. A business plan for an enhanced food/snack service for the approximate time frame 8:00am – 2:30pm is encouraged.

37. What has been the customer base in the café for the past year? What was it in 2019 when the building was full?

**Answer:** The café has historically been a snack and break room for DDS staff and visitors.

38. Who is the incumbent on this contract?

**Answer:** The incumbent is a DDS GSE Qualified Provider.

39. Why is the incumbent leaving the contract?

**Answer:** The current provider has provided notice to cease due to 'other programmatic challenges' pulling resources away from this program.

40. Are all the current workers working and what are their schedules? How many hours is each worker coming in per day/week?

**Answer:**

Worker 1 is currently working 5-hour days, 8:30a-2p, with 1/2-hour unpaid lunch  
Worker 2 is currently working 3-hour days, 9:30a-1p, with 1/2-hour unpaid lunch  
Worker 3 is currently working 3-hour days, 9:30a-1p, with 1/2-hour unpaid lunch  
Worker 4 is currently not working onsite due to pandemic related task reduction however pre pandemic hours were 5-hour days, 8:30a-2p, with 1/2-hour unpaid lunch. This workers' status is expected to be determined within 30 days of the application deadline

41. If we are unable to see the site, can you send photos that represent the full operations and showcase all details needed to make the best proposal?

**Answer:** A PowerPoint with photos used for the info session on 11/18/2021 will be made available with the FAQ document.

42. The GSE folks that are currently working in the East Hartford DDS office; are there any transportation needs that we will be providing?

**Answer:** The workers' transportation to and from the worksite is provided by the residential provider and/or family/guardians

43. Are you able to give us the rates for each of the individuals currently working?

**Answer:**

Worker 1 as referenced above is LON 5, Rate \$20.08/hr.

Worker 2 as referenced above is LON 4, Rate \$18.44/hr.  
Worker 3 as referenced above is LON 5, Rate \$20.08/hr.